

Bodenheimer³ confirmed it as an irregular winter visitor only and it would seem that invasions have ceased for at least the past 15–20 years. In the Natural History Department of Tel-Aviv University I have seen some mounted specimens which had been purchased in invasion years from Arabs, who caught them in winter for cage birds.

In April 1958, I was fortunate to find a very isolated colony of this species breeding about 15 kilometres north-west of Beersheba, Israel. The colony was nesting in acacia bushes beside the road and extended over about a mile. Beyond this the bushes held no nests, although conditions were exactly the same.

The nests were situated mostly at a height of 1.5–2.0 metres above ground level, but I also found two nests in the tops of young eucalyptus trees, 3.5–4.0 metres high. The colony consisted of about 100–150 nests and the birds were surprisingly tame, the sitting females waiting almost to arm's length before slipping away. The eggs, 5–7 in number were pale greenish-white with small red dots and blotches. Both the birds and the eggs corresponded in size to the Greenfinch, *Chloris chloris*. The males remained mostly near the nest site during incubation, singing in a very peculiar, soft, melodious tone.

This colony seemingly succeeded in raising young and in August I saw small flocks of young in the vicinity. In the winter they disappeared, but in the spring of 1959 they were back, breeding in exactly the same area. The nest was chiefly lined with cotton and it is of interest that cotton plantations are a recent agricultural development here, existing only for the past two or three years, but gradually extending.

So far, this is the only confirmed breeding colony found in the country. This interesting record is all the more remarkable since the species was not even known as a winter visitor to the country during the past 15 years.

I am most grateful to Dr. James M. Harrison for his help with the manuscript.

References:—

¹ E. Hartert, "Vogel der Palearkt. Fauna", (1912–1938), Vol. I, p. 91.

² J. Aharoni. "Torat hecha'y" (in Hebrew), Vol. I, p. 166. 1923.

³ S. Bodenheimer. "Animal Life in Palastine", p. 158. 1935.

Notes on some Philippine Tailor-birds

by DR. KENNETH C. PARKES

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The taxonomy of the group of Philippine tailor-birds assigned by Delacour and Mayr (1946) to the species *Orthotomus atrogularis* has not yet been fully worked out. Particularly intriguing is the status of the two Luzon forms, *derbianus* Moore and *chloronotus* Ogilvie-Grant. Delacour and Mayr list both as subspecies of *O. atrogularis*, but the line between the ranges of the two is not as simple as they indicate, and it is highly possible that the two forms may prove to be sympatric in parts of central Luzon.

Peters (1939: 110) believed this group of tailor-birds to be closely allied to, and possibly conspecific with, *O. sericeus*, but omitted any mention of *O. atrogularis* in his discussion of relationships. I agree with Delacour and Mayr that this group of subspecies is better placed with *atrogularis*. Nominate *atrogularis* has a green tail, while in *sericeus* and its races the

tail is brown. It is true that some of the Philippine races have brown tails like *sericeus*, but these intergrade with green-tailed races. Sexual dimorphism is strongly developed in *O. a. atrogularis* and is absent in *O. sericeus*; it is poorly developed or absent in most of the Philippine forms, but is quite evident in the populations of certain of the central islands (see beyond).

The species *Orthotomus sericeus* does enter the Philippine avifauna, but only on Palawan and adjacent islands, Cagayan Sulu, and the Sulu Archipelago. Delacour and Mayr assign all of these islands to the subspecies *nuntius* Bangs, which was based on one specimen from Cagayan Sulu (the type), one from Jolo (=Sulu Island), and four from Sibutu. Comparison of 17 Palawan specimens with 6 from Borneo convinces me that Peters (*loc. cit.*) was correct in assigning the Palawan population to nominate *sericeus* rather than to *nuntius*. The chapter on warblers, including the tailor-birds, in Delacour and Mayr (1946) was initialled by Mayr; Delacour later (1947: 280) reverted to *sericeus* for the Palawan birds. I have seen only two adults and one juvenile from the Sulus, but *nuntius* strikes me as being a very weak race. Individual variation in *sericeus* encompasses all to the characters used by Bangs (1922: 82) in defining *nuntius*, and I believe the latter name is best placed in the synonymy of *sericeus*. All Philippine populations of *Orthotomus sericeus* would thus be referred to the nominate race.

The subspecies *Orthotomus atrogularis castaneiceps* Walden has long been assigned a range including the islands of Guimaras (type locality), Ticao, Masbate, Panay, and Negros. The only attempt to sub-divide this range was that of Steere (1890: 20), who described *panayensis* (as a full species, in line with the taxonomic concepts of his day) from Panay. Bourns and Worcester (1894: 59) rightly pointed out that Guimaras and Panay are so similar zoogeographically that it would be highly unlikely that one form would be found on Panay and another on Guimaras, Negros and Masbate. They quite properly relegated *panayensis* to the synonymy of *castaneiceps*. In refusing to admit any subdivision of *castaneiceps*, however, Bourns and Worcester were misled by what they believed to be simple individual variation in colour. They, as well as other authors who have worked with this group of tailor-birds, have overlooked the fact that these populations of *Orthotomus atrogularis* are sexually dimorphic, although less strikingly so than is the nominate race. Females are greyer, less green dorsally, and are less streaked on the throat than are males. When the sexes are segregated, it is immediately apparent that the variation mentioned by Bourns and Worcester is not only sexual but geographic as well, and the population of Negros is clearly distinct. It may be called

Orthotomus atrogularis heterolaemus, new subspecies.

Type: Chicago Natural History Museum no. 219508, adult ♂, collected at Lake Balinsasayo, Negros Island, Philippines, 13th December, 1953, by A. L. Rand (collector's no. 90).

Characters: sex for sex, more extensively grey (less green) dorsally than *O. a. castaneiceps*, and more heavily streaked on the throat. Males of *heterolaemus* are conspicuously streaked with dark grey and white on the throat and upper breast; at the opposite extreme are females of *castaneiceps*, in which the throat streaks are at best only faintly indicated.

Specimens examined: *O. a. castaneiceps*—Guimaras, 1; Panay, 2; Ticao, 2; Masbate, 1. *O. a. heterolaemus*—Negros, 16.

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Accidental Maiming of a Black-throated Diver

by DR. JAMES M. HARRISON

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On 17th January 1960 an adult female Black-throated Diver, *Colymbus arcticus arcticus* Linnaeus was found on the Kent—Sussex boundary near Frant, Sussex.

The bird was maintained alive for some days and then died. It was noted at the time when it was found that it had a healed amputation of the left “foot” at the tibio-tarsal articulation. In previous communications the writer¹ and other authors, (Manson-Bahr², Sage³, Pitman^{4,5}, Wainwright⁶, and Harrison⁷) have called attention to the probability that this type of mutilation in both waders and duck could be the result of being trapped by clams which are common in many fresh water reservoirs as well as in lochs. This contention has indeed been more or less proved by the catching of a Teal with such a mollusc actually attached to one leg, as recorded by Wainwright⁶.

In previous communications this has been referred to as “predation”. In a sense this is true, although clams cannot be regarded as intentionally preying upon birds, and it is purely accidental that, actuated by tactile stimulation, the mollusc reacts by closing smartly upon any presenting part, thus trapping toes, tarsus or indeed anything that provokes the reflex. Once trapped such a clam will never let go for the simple reason that so long as any movement persists, however slight this may be, contraction and tonic closure will be maintained, and it is only when necrosis and sloughing occur and the trapped part separates, that trapper and trapped will part company.

The present instance must have occurred in adult life and since the last moult and moreover whilst the bird was resting at the edge of a loch or similar situation, for, in addition to the loss of the “foot” it had also lost a considerable part of the primaries of the left wing-tip, which must obviously have been folded in close apposition to the “foot” at the time of the accident.